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ABSTRACT

This handbook was designed to help educators develop a proactive school-preparedness plan for dealing with a variety of crises, ranging from natural disasters to accidents to acts of violence. The School Emergency Response Plan (SERP) is not a violence-prevention program; rather, it is part of an overall effort to ensure a safe learning environment for all students. Data for the handbook were gathered from school observations and an administrator focus group. The planning process creates a vehicle for community collaboration that includes public-service and emergency-response entities, business, the media, social services, transportation systems, community leaders, and others. The seven steps in the planning process include: (1) identify key players and their roles; (2) conduct a school inventory of resources and limitations; (3) design the SERP; (4) apprise local institutions of the SERP; (5) clarify roles and responsibilities with community-service agencies and public-safety departments; (6) conduct and evaluate a crisis exercise; and (7) update the plan. One figure, one table, 6 worksheets, and lists of possible school-emergency situations and responses are included. (LMI)

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ED 383 077

Being Prepared:

The School Emergency Response Plan Handbook

Efrain Garza Fuentes
Raymond M. Rose

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The Regional Laboratory
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Efrain Garza Fuentes
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300 Brickstone Square, Suite 950, Andover, MA 01810

This version of *Being Prepared: The School Emergency Response Plan Handbook* was developed with clients responding to a variety of emergencies. The Laboratory continues to test and refine these materials and asks readers to share feedback with us so we can incorporate it into the next edition.

These materials are also available electronically on the Laboratory's Gopher server and WorldWideWeb Homepage on the internet. The addresses are HTTP://WWW.NEIRL.ORG and GOPHER.NEIRL.ORG.

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Readers have permission to photocopy the tables and worksheets to facilitate working with a team to develop their plans. Please credit the Regional Laboratory for Educational Improvement of the Northeast and Islands.

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Foreword

Whenever we ask groups of people to describe the ideal learning environment, words like "safe," "secure," "intellectually stimulating," and "engaging" inevitably come up. Few would disagree that our schools and communities should strive to create such environments for all their students. Unfortunately, as we all know, establishing security anywhere in our society is becoming more and more difficult. Schools are no longer insulated – if they ever were – from the violence plaguing the society around them.

And so it is that schools everywhere – from our most densely to our most sparsely settled regions – are feeling the need to prepare for a variety of situations, including incidents of violence. To help respond to that need, the Laboratory has published this handbook. We see it as but one of many strategies schools can use to ensure that all their students can spend their in-school time engaged in high quality learning.

In fact, the act of building a preparedness plan gives schools a chance to foster that sense of community that is so beneficial to student achievement. A crucial part of the plan is drawing together the school staff and community members to work toward a common goal – ensuring the safety of all students before, during, and after a crisis of any kind. Schools might also find that in preparing their plans, they identify some early warning signs and work to prevent crisis situations before they occur.

This particular publication does not deal with the area of instruction – engaging students in high-level learning opportunities; other Laboratory publications do that. Rather, it shares one way to establish plans that we all hope a school never has to implement. But as Efrain Fuentes and Ray Rose have found in their work with schools facing a crisis, those with preparedness plans weather crises with far less disruption of learning than those caught unaware and unprepared.

Glen Harvey
Executive Director
The Regional Laboratory for Educational
Improvement of the Northeast and Islands
April 1995

RICHMOND TIMES DISPATCH
BROOKINS
TEACHERS' LOUNGE
MORE STUDENTS CARRYING GUNS TO SCHOOL
"... (SIGH) ... I MISS THE GOOD OL' DAYS WHEN THE ONLY DISRUPTION WAS WHEN MARY BROUGHT A LITTLE LAMB!..."

Source: Reprinted with permission of Gary Brookins, Richmond Times-Dispatch.

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Introduction

Today's schools are confronting more dangerous situations than they ever imagined, or that most school personnel have been trained to handle. By the late 1980s a minimum of 157,000 crimes were committed every day in U.S. schools (Quarles 1989). Annually, three million incidents of assault, rape, or robbery occur on school property, and approximately 525,000 assaults and robberies occur in secondary schools each month (Reed and Shaw 1993). Add these violent incidents to the potential for accidents or natural disasters, and it becomes crucial for schools to be prepared to cope with and manage any crisis.

This handbook is intended to create and foster a proactive approach to a potential crisis in your school. It prepares the total school community to cope with the possible impact of a destabilizing occurrence. The planning it promotes has broad applicability because the potential for on-campus violence, disturbances, or other crises, impacts all schools. Violence or natural disasters can occur in any community, including those with no history of a violent act or episode.

With schools and their administrators increasingly being held accountable for students' lives as well as their academic achievement, school personnel are forced to attend to needs more basic than academics and instruction. They must also attend to the emotional, psychological, and safety needs of their students.

The School Emergency Response Plan (SERP) developed with this handbook is not intended to be a "violence prevention" program; nor should it be seen as an alternative to violence prevention efforts. Rather, it represents one important element in a school's efforts to ensure a safe learning environment for all students. Any SERP should represent a point along a school safety/violence prevention continuum that can and should be developed simultaneously with a general violence prevention program. However, a SERP can be developed and implemented as a first step. Although much effort and energy will go into a good SERP, the *return* on this investment is very much worth the effort.

This handbook was developed from two main areas of work: One, observation data collected from a variety of schools faced with putting their communities back together after a violent incident, coupled with findings from a "violence/conflict" focus group held in an urban school system; two, the authors' many years of administration, teaching, training, and research experience with school systems facing a variety of crises. The data generated from the focus group came from administrators who were brought together to problem solve and unravel the causes, impact, reverberations and most importantly, "actions in response to" the increased and seemingly unabated violence in their school districts.

In *any* school, the teachers, students, parents, and staff will be the main people affected by a crisis, so it stands to reason that they should be pivotal in the development of a

preparedness plan. The handbook describes the roles people need to assume in a crisis situation. For example: Who calls the parents? Who handles or speaks with the media (or inversely, who would not be a person to speak with the media)? Who assesses the psychological support needed? What role if any does the school take or assume in funeral arrangements, or attendance, etc.? The **planning process** creates a vehicle for community collaboration that includes public service and emergency response entities, businesses, media, social services, transportation systems, community leaders, and others. The ultimate goal is to have everyone know their particular role and function when the time comes to respond to a crisis. Although it clearly has applicability post-crisis, the process we propose brings the entire school community together ***before*** a crisis rather than after.

Schools regularly conduct fire drills to prepare for the unlikely event of a fire. Schools must begin planning for other emergencies as well. A scan of the media over recent years shows more acts of violence in schools than fires. The concept of the preparedness planning is to have the school community be as prepared as possible to respond to a range of emergencies wider than just a fire.

The SERP, however, is not a replacement for a fire evacuation plan. In a well developed SERP the fire evacuation plan is one of the response options. In fact, the fire evacuation plan can be used as a response to other types of crises. The Handbook provides the school with additional options to use in coping with the realities of managing a school and protecting its occupants. It provides a deliberate, well-planned response for a large array of emergency situations. It means that when faced with a crisis, the school will have had the opportunity to respond to a situation that has already been discussed, using strategies that have been prioritized and practiced. This is a far better alternative than having to fly by the seat of the pants in response to an unexpected situation where a wrong decision could unknowingly and unfortunately cost lives or possibly create additional, avoidable trauma.

What makes this handbook especially valuable is that it can be applied and adapted to the particular culture and organizational structure of each school. It provides both a procedure and framework to help every school develop its own unique handbook. The data and information generated by this process will accurately reflect your total school community's concerns, fears, resources, and capacity to handle a crisis situation.

There are seven steps in the development and maintenance of the School Emergency Response Plan. Many of the steps include worksheets and checklists, while others are very interactive and "constructivist" in nature. They will be spelled out in the following sections:

1. Total School/Community Involvement

2. School Inventory

3. Design of School Emergency Response Plan

4. Outreach/Planning

5. Critical Discussion with Community Services and Public Safety Departments

6. Piloting of Plan and Debrief

7. SERP Updates

Step 1. Total School/Community Involvement

Purpose: **To identify who should be at the table.**

Though the process of creating a SERP could be initiated from any number of groups in the community (principal, parent, teacher, public service agency, student, superintendent, or business), we assume that the school will take the leadership role. For this initial planning phase it is recommended that a small group of people (four to five) be assembled to familiarize themselves with the planning process, and begin to complete **Table 1 and Worksheets 1.1 and 1.2.** This initial convening of a limited number of key players should make the planning smoother and more strategic.

Figure 1 provides a framework for developing the *core* SERP team. These are key people representing the various entities in your school community. They act as liaisons or connections to a body of information and/or people. A core emergency response team will make it easier to manage decisions, changes, information, and the development of the SERP. **Table 1** and accompanying **Worksheet 1.2** will assist you in listing additional entities and/or people who would be invited to attend during a large group meeting to develop the SERP. Not all identified participants need to attend *all* SERP planning activities; however, be strategic about *whom* to bring in *when.* Involvement of all parties ensures a collaboratively developed response.

These beginning steps are the most basic, yet sometimes the most difficult parts of the plan to execute. If some participants have had an antagonistic relationship with the school in the past, it will take time and patience to bring them to the table. It is important that you do so. The SERP should be the community's "common ground" and/or agenda. Coming together before a crisis is a lot more productive and fruitful that dealing with after effects, and making an extra effort to be proactively engaged can be extremely rewarding. A statement to potential "naysayers" like: ***"Leave your past negative history or experience at the door"*** can prove useful.

Each school should include from **Table 1** the appropriate entities and/or individuals given its context or structure (e.g., a city school might include the mayor or his/her staff. Other schools could involve the town manager, selectman, or alderman). Furthermore, there may be agencies or intervention teams that are part of the state attorney general's office, civil rights community relations office, U.S. Department of Justice's Community Relations Service, or other similar agency. These latter agencies could be called in to do a final review and/or comment on a developed plan.

Bringing together the stakeholders of the community is a significant consideration and principle in the development of the SERP. Some individuals will already possess substantial emergency response training. They may also have a different perspective on the services available as well as the range of responses that they could assume in handling a crisis.

NOTE: The larger school system/district or community may already have a crisis intervention team or mediation team that should also be included in this planning phase. Furthermore, if an emergency booklet or policy already exists, a careful review of that is recommended.

Think about the following question: Which message from the school spokesperson during or after a crisis produces greater confidence and provides a quicker road to your school's recovery? "We're still in shock over the incident" or "In accordance with our Emergency Response Plan Handbook, we've contacted agencies that will be on-site to help students and staff to cope with the situation."

In this first step of the SERP, begin to identify "key" or lead people for the possible entities to be eventually involved in the planning. The titles in the boxes are simply guides; a blank version of **Figure 1** can be found in **Worksheet 1.1**.

Figure 1
Identifying Key Players

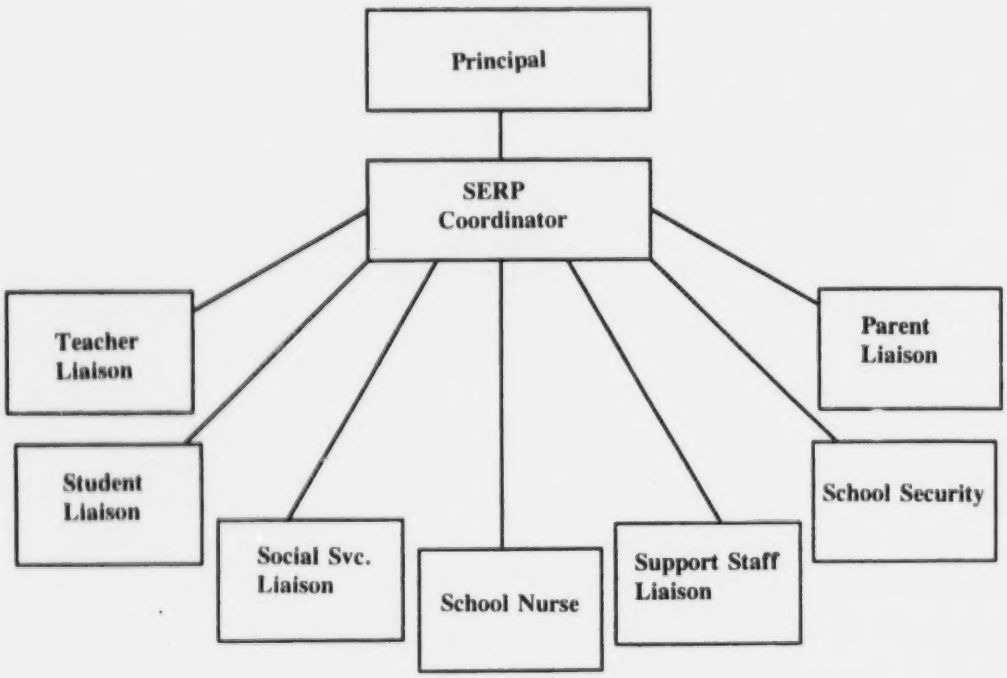


Table 1
Potential Participants in the SERP Development

The following table will help you think about those you may want to involve in the development of the SERP. It is not necessary to involve all of those listed in the total process, but the wider the involvement in the planning, the greater the range of response options, and ultimately the more successful your emergency plan. Often one person can represent a variety of roles, but it is important that everyone in the school community know that there is a SERP in place and they should know their role and function.

SCHOOL BUILDING

Administration:
- ☐ Principal
- ☐ Assistant Principal
- ☐ Academic Program Coordinator
- ☐ Athletic Program Coordinator

Teachers:
- ☐ Itinerant
- ☐ Bilingual/ESL
- ☐ Special Needs
- ☐ Aides

Other:
- ☐ Students
- ☐ Counselors
- ☐ Psychologists
- ☐ School Nurse
- ☐ Secretarial/Support Staff
- ☐ Building Maint./Custodian
- ☐ Cafeteria Manager/Staff
- ☐ Paraprofessionals
- ☐ School Security
- ☐ Attendance Officer

PARENTS
- ☐ Parent Action Council
- ☐ Parent Teacher Organization
- ☐ Parent Teacher Association

DISTRICT LEVEL
- ☐ School Transportation
- ☐ Public Relations
- ☐ Superintendent

COMMUNITY SERVICES
- ☐ Fire Department
- ☐ Police Department
- ☐ Ambulance/EMT Services

Hospitals
- ☐ Trauma Unit
- ☐ Psychological Services
- ☐ Social Services

Mental Health Services
- ☐ Psychologists
- ☐ Social Workers

COURTS
- ☐ Youth Workers
- ☐ Court Clinics
- ☐ Attorney General

PUBLIC UTILITIES
- ☐ Phone Company
- ☐ Electric Company
- ☐ Gas Company
- ☐ Oil Company
- ☐ Public Transportation
- ☐ Public Works
- ☐ Highway Department

CITY/TOWN GOVT.
- ☐ Town Manager
- ☐ District Attorney
- ☐ Alderman/Mayor/Other

STATE GOVT. AGENCIES
- ☐ Youth Services
- ☐ Corrections
- ☐ Dept. of Mental Health
- ☐ Dept. of Mental Retardation
- ☐ Office for Children
- ☐ Human Rights Comm.

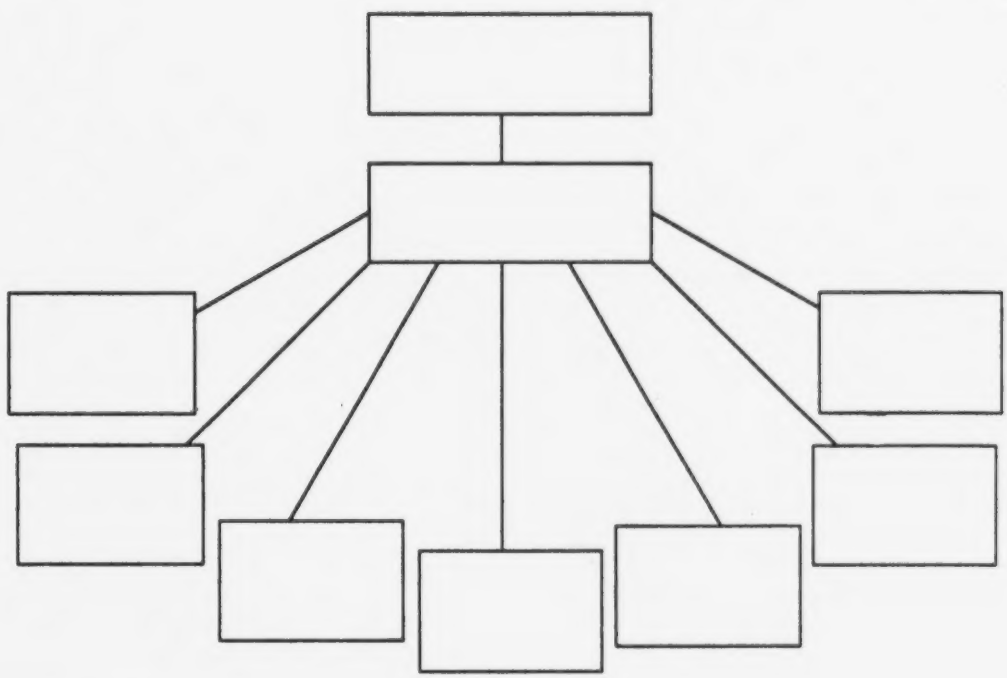
CLERGY
- ☐ Minister
- ☐ Priest
- ☐ Rabbi
- ☐ Reverend
- ☐ Other: _____

CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS
- ☐ ACLU
- ☐ B'Nai B'Rith
- ☐ Lions Club
- ☐ NAACP
- ☐ National Urban League
- ☐ Rotary Club
- ☐ Other: _____

MEDIA
- ☐ Newspaper(s)
- ☐ Radio
- ☐ Television
- ☐ Local Cable Access

OTHERS
- ☐ Environmental Protect. Agency
- ☐ Civil Defense
- ☐ Local Colleges/Universities
- ☐ Disaster Relief Organization

Worksheet 1.1
Identifying Key Players



Worksheet 1.2 (page 1 of 6)
Participants' Role in the SERP

Worksheet 1.2 identifies the specific person, phone number, and their role and function; if appropriate, a back-up person should also be identified. In addition, there are blank spaces to configure the participants as you deem appropriate.

SCHOOL BUILDING

Administration

Title	Name and Phone Number	Role in the SERP
Principal		
Assistant Principal		
Academic Program Coordinator		
Athletic Director		

Teachers

Itinerant		
Bilingual/ESL		
Special Needs		
Aides		

Other

Students		
Counselors		
Psychologists		
School Nurse		
Secretarial/Support Staff		
Building Maintenance		
Paraprofessionals		
School Security		
Attendance Officer		

Worksheet 1.2 (page 2 of 6)
Participants' Role in the SERP

PARENTS

Title	Name and Phone Number	Role in the SERP
Parent Action Council		
Parent Teacher Organization		
Parent Teacher Association		

DISTRICT LEVEL

School Transportation		
Public Relations		
Superintendent		

COMMUNITY SERVICES AND PUBLIC SAFETY ORGANIZATIONS

Fire Department		
Police Department		
Ambulance/EMT Services		

Hospitals

Trauma Unit		
Psychological Services		
Social Services		

Worksheet 1.2 (page 3 of 6)
Participants' Role in the SERP

Mental Health Services

Title	Name and Phone Number	Role in the SERP
Psychologists		
Social Workers		

COURTS

Youth Workers		
Court Clinics		
Attorney General		

PUBLIC UTILITIES

Telephone Company		
Electric Company		
Gas Company		
Oil Company		
Public Transportation		
Public Works		
Highway Department		

Worksheet 1.2 (page 4 of 6)
Participants' Role in the SERP

CITY AND TOWN GOVERNMENT

Title	Name and Phone Number	Role in the SERP
Town Manager		
District Attorney		
Alderman/Mayor/Other		

STATE GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Youth Services		
Corrections		
Dept. of Mental Health		
Dept. of Mental Retardation		
Office for Children		
Human Rights Commission		

CLERGY

Minister		
Priest		
Rabbi		
Reverend		
Other		

Worksheet 1.2 (page 5 of 6)
Participants' Role in the SERP

CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS

Title	Name and Phone Number	Role in the SERP
American Civil Liberties Union		
B'Nai B'Rith		
Lions Club		
NAACP		
National Urban League		
Rotary Club		
Other		

MEDIA

Newspaper		
Radio		
Television		
Local Cable Access		

OTHERS

Environmental Protection Agency		
Civil Defense		
Local Colleges/ Universities		
Disaster Relief Organization		

Worksheet 1.2 (page 6 of 6)
Participants' Role in the SERP

OTHERS

Title	Name and Phone Number	Role in the SERP

Step 2. School Inventory

Purpose: **To establish/identify the resources, limitations, or weak points that exist in the school community.**

Worksheet 2 (two parts) provides the basic structure for taking inventory of the experiences and resources that are available within the school. These "resources" may be called upon in an emergency or crisis. Through these worksheets, you will note strengths and assets (Part One) as well as deficiencies and liabilities (Part Two), which may currently exist within the school community. This will also inform you as to what specific types of training and professional development are necessary. For example, it is necessary to assess whether you need a nurse or other person with CPR training or first aid training. If that skill is essential but does not exist in-house, what plan should you put in place to acquire it?

This is also a time to consider what legal liabilities there are, if any, for not having certain people, procedures, or skills in place or accessible. After you've completed this inventory step you should return to both **Table 1** and **Worksheet 1.2** to either verify a resource or assign someone an additional function. This *checks* and *balances* function should also be assigned to **one**, or at most, **two** people, so as to avoid a scenario in which someone needed CPR training, yet no one made sure it was addressed.

NOTE: If it is determined that a particular individual has specific and necessary training that would prove useful in a crisis, be sure the person is comfortable about being assigned that role. This is similar to an airline attendant checking if a person feels comfortable operating an emergency door exit on an airplane.

Worksheet 2, Part 1
In-School Strengths, Assets, and Training

Skill	Name of Resource/Person	Accepts Assignment Y/N
Medical		
Basic first aid		
CPR		
Heimlich maneuver		
Other:		
Counseling		
Crisis counseling		
Grief counseling		
Suicide counseling		
Other:		
Mediation		
Self-Defense		
Hand-to-hand combat		
Martial arts		
Firearms safety		

Worksheet 2, Part 2
In-School Liabilities, Vulnerabilities, and/or Limitations

Special Attention Necessary	Name	Person Informed/ Consulted Y/N
Inability/doubtful ability to handle a crisis, for whatever reason		
Unable to respond to crisis appropriately		
Unable to cope with high stress situations		
Physical handicap		
Limited English language proficiency		
Problem being placed in proximity to another (potential for violence)		
Other:		

Step 3. Design of School Emergency Response Plan

Purpose: **To assess learnings from past emergencies or crises; take a reading on your school climate, and fold the information into your SERP.**

This section is more "process" oriented and interactive and results in your school's actual SERP. This is the moment in which to convene all people that will play a role in the planning. The activity begins with a case study. In groups of five to six people, review the case study: ***"Unrest in the School"*** and then proceed to **Worksheet 3.1 (2 pages): Case Study Response Options.**

After completing and reviewing the responses to the case study from the members of your group, proceed to the next worksheet. **Worksheet 3.2** asks you to think about your own school's ***past, current*** and potential ***future*** crises, *or* emergencies – your worst nightmares – along with some responses, planned or unplanned, and provides a format to list the emergency situations that might occur. It is important to develop as broad a list of possible or potential emergencies. These situations can often be drawn from media reports of situations around the country or in your community or state. Public service agencies and emergency response personnel will have a substantially different set of situations to bring to the table. Not all situations need to be as striking or dramatic as a hostage scenario; someone who falls down a flight of stairs and has multiple fractures or broken bones can be just as traumatic.

Every situation that surfaces allows for a more thoughtful, relevant, and proactive approach and subsequent response. Having at least talked about and verbalized a situation provides a greater ability to respond than when facing a situation that has never been considered or voiced.

Previous training experience on emergency response planning has demonstrated that individuals (teachers, parents, etc.) initially reflect on *external* situations brought into the school (e.g., a gang fight on campus), which tends to bring out their feeling of vulnerability and lack of safety in the school or community. People's fears, anxieties, and overall concerns should be addressed directly and in a sensitive and professional manner. This stage of work may create a great deal of anxiety, and it is wise to consider creating a future forum for discussion of vulnerabilities, if necessary. The risk of not providing such a forum is that the anxiety may spill over into the classroom and affect learning and teaching.

> **NOTE:** ***Do not minimize or discount any situation or early warning signs that surface as you discuss your own school climate!***

The media or a disgruntled individual may do even more harm in a crisis if the victims or school individuals are quoted as saying: "We could see it coming and no one did anything about it." Encourage people to express misgivings or frustrations and problem solve together before the crisis.

As you discuss potential responses, keep in mind that it is possible and recommended to have within the SERP different responses to different types of crises. It is better to develop several responses and then collapse the plans than try to fit all response options into one.

Once your SERP has been developed, you will need to create a simple signal system that will communicate to *all* staff throughout the building. The signal system should be able to reach everyone who will need to be informed of the crisis wherever the person may be. The signal system should communicate to staff and students which response should be followed: evacuate, stay put, secure the building, etc. For example the announcement: *"Ms. Nelson, please pick up your briefcase"* could mean that all classroom doors be locked until further notice. A "simple" signal system to communicate with emergency public services is also recommended.

Case Study
Unrest in the School

Rumors of unrest in the neighborhood are filtering through the high school. There have been two incidents in the local park where groups of teens have been separated and disbanded by the police. On this day a fight breaks out in the cafeteria between two seniors. It is swift and violent and a group gathers and watches and cheers it on but does not mix into it. It seems to be over, although kids are arriving from all over the school. The teachers attempt to disburse the teens but a knot of students who are right in the center are visibly upset. Several of the students are sobbing almost uncontrollably and their voices are high and shrill. People gather around them and arguments break out. Soon, groups of kids are yelling at each other. Teachers try to move them out. There are scuffles and both students and teachers begin to get hurt.

Someone calls the police. Some of the kids move away voluntarily, and other kids go into the guidance office with the counselor. Two other fights break out in the hallways in two different locations and a teacher runs out in a panic and screams to the police who are waiting outside to come in. "It's out of control," he says. "We need help." The police come into the school and the officer in charge tells the principal, "We're in charge now. We'll take over." The canine officer is standing behind him with a large German Shepard straining at his leash.

(Proceed to Worksheet 3.1)

Worksheet 3.1 (page 1 of 2)
Case Study Response Options

To be completed in response to the case study, "*Unrest in the School.*"

1. Describe the situation:

2. What is your assessment?

3. Describe a possible scenario/response.

Worksheet 3.1 (page 2 of 2)
Case Study Response Options

Think about the following:

1. Can you think of any special skills/resources that should have been made available during this situation.

2. Were there any other organizations/people or services that could have been useful on-site?

3. Can you think of any actions that could have been taken before the crisis?

4. Think about the discussion or conflict you've had in your own group during this activity. Is there something that came up that might get in the way of a successful emergency response in your school?

Worksheet 3.2 (page 1 of 3)
Your School: Past, Present, and Future

Instructions:

List two situations of either violence, aggression, and/or other crisis/emergency your school has experienced. Use situations that have occurred on campus, or list situations that occurred in the community that had an impact on the students or faculty. If none have occurred, pick two from the **Possible School Emergency Situations** list on page 27.

As you work on this section of your SERP, think about things at two levels: a personal one and an organizational one. What can you do in your individual role and what can the school do as an institution? This is also the time to be honest and straightforward about your concerns, worries or anxieties. Are there early warning signs that should be heeded or addressed? Think in a prevention mode, and as remote or as far-fetched as you think some concerns are allow them to surface for discussion.

Also, be as specific as possible about who will do what, especially in the follow-up section. If there are any vulnerabilities or weak links in the system, the time to bring them up is now.

Reminder: If you are unable to think of something, refer to the **Possible School Emergency Situations** or to **Possible School Responses to Emergencies** for additional ideas and information.

Worksheet 3.2 (page 2 of 3)
Your School: Past, Present, and Future

For each situation you've identified, answer the questions that follow. Feel free to add questions of your own.

Situation #1: (describe briefly)

1. How did you handle the situation personally/organizationally?

2. How did you and/or the school follow up on this situation?

3. How might you/the school handle it better?

4. Could it happen again? Why? Why not?

5. Were there any warning signs then, and are there any now?

Worksheet 3.2 (page 3 of 3)
Your School: Past, Present, and Future

Situation #2: (describe briefly)

1. How did you handle the situation personally/organizationally?

2. How did you and/or the school follow up on this situation?

3. How might you/the school handle it better?

4. Could it happen again? Why? Why not?

5. Were there any warning signs then, and are there any now?

Possible School Emergency Situations
(To be used for brainstorming)

1. A fight breaks out between two (or more) large groups of students: in the cafeteria; during an assembly; after school.
2. A teacher has a heart attack during class.
3. Someone falls down the stairs, has multiple broken bones, and is bleeding from a head injury.
4. An outsider enters the school with a gun and takes a classroom (students and teacher) hostage.
5. A staff member/student suffers severe arterial bleeding resulting from stab wound or glass cut.
6. The roof of the cafeteria collapses.
7. A fuel spill from delivery truck has explosive potential.
8. Noxious fumes fill corridor outside cleaning closet.
9. An apparent explosive device is found in a trash container.
10. A tanker spills toxic chemicals on road near the school.
11. A staff member is warned by an anonymous phone call that they will be attacked after school.
12. A bomb threat is called into the school office.
13. A tornado strikes the school district.
14. The school boiler explodes, blasting out wall and roof.
15. A student on school grounds is injured in drive-by shooting.

Possible School Responses to Emergencies (page 1 of 3)
(Things to consider when developing your SERP)

What to do with:

STUDENT/STAFF MOVEMENT

- ☐ No change, situation normal.
- ☐ Early dismissal (as with half-day program).
- ☐ No movement (everyone stays in the classrooms or offices, corridors are cleared).
- ☐ No movement and secure the building (all exterior and classroom doors are locked).
- ☐ Limited evacuation (by wing or classroom) to another part of the building (e.g. auditorium, gym).
- ☐ Full building evacuation (same as fire evacuation plan).

SCHOOL SITE SECURITY

- ☐ No change, situation normal.
- ☐ Prevent students from leaving the building.
- ☐ Restrict access to the building.
- ☐ Emergency services only.
- ☐ Media access.
- ☐ Restrict outside access to school grounds.
- ☐ Parent access.
- ☐ Disable pay phone(s).

Possible School Responses to Emergencies (page 2 of 3)
(Things to consider when developing your SERP)

What to do with:

STUDENT/STAFF TRANSPORTATION

☐ Normal dismissal.

☐ After school events canceled.

☐ Immediate dismissal of all students within walking distance.

☐ Students who normally use personal transportation go to buses.

☐ Hold buses the buses until notified.

☐ Provide bus transportation for students who normally walk home.

☐ Students board buses at designated area after building evacuation.

OTHER

PARENTS/GUARDIANS

☐ Contact all parents/guardians.

☐ Contact parents/guardians of affected students.

MEDIA

☐ Contact during situation.

☐ Contact after situation.

EMERGENCY SERVICES

☐ Contact during situation.

☐ Contact after situation.

Possible School Responses to Emergencies (page 3 of 3)
(Things to consider when developing your SERP)

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

- ☐ Notification of parents/guardians of those involved.
- ☐ Provide appropriate support services to those directly involved.
- ☐ Provide opportunities for appropriate support services for the whole school community.
- ☐ Legal action or referral.
- ☐ Rumor control phone line established.

WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

- ☐ Students
- ☐ Staff
- ☐ Parents
- ☐ Media

ASSEMBLY/MEETINGS

- ☐ Students
- ☐ Staff
- ☐ Parents
- ☐ Media

Step 4. Outreach/Planning

Purpose: **To apprise local institutions of the SERP.**

Depending on your relationship with local media, you may want to bring reporters in at the beginning of the SERP planning or when you're about to do your simulation.

This phase is opportune to negotiate an agreement or understanding with local institutions with regard to media communications and information flow for emergencies. Remember that it is the media's job to report the news, and responsible journalists will not want to add to your problems. If they can be assured of getting the factual information in a timely fashion, they are often willing to cooperate.

Invite your local news media to do a story on a proactive step being taken by a school, like development of the SERP. Unfortunately, our experience has demonstrated that news that is encouraging or looks on the bright side of things is seldom reported.

In addition, a visit to the local health, hospital, and/or mental health services center staff would make things easier in case of an emergency requiring counseling or medical attention. You may want to find out what capacity a particular "people services" agency has (for example, trauma counseling).

Step 5. Critical Discussion with Community Services and Public Safety Departments

Purpose: **To establish a plan of action with emergency teams (fire/police/ambulance) about who has control in situations and when and how responsibility changes hands.**

NOTE: This step should be one of the final steps in the process and should be enacted once all other specifics are identified.

It is important to have an understanding of who will be in control of any situation. One school called in the local police to help quell a student fight and found that the police assumed total control of the site as soon as they arrived on campus. The reaction or possible over-reaction in some cases made matters worse. Just what "control" means and how far it extends is an important consideration. It may be possible to negotiate this issue face-to-face before the fact or crisis. This last statement makes it clear why *all* the stakeholders need to be involved in the development of the SERP. These matters cannot be negotiated during a crisis! It is important for the school officials to know whether to relinquish *all* control over the entire campus when particular agencies are called in, or only when a certain type of emergency is declared.

Related to confidentiality, does the media have a right to question emergency personnel? Will they be able to respond to questions? Are there any problems with the physical plant? Can doors that are locked with chains be opened in an emergency? Can a stretcher be easily moved or transported with a body through the building. If this is not possible, what is the option, and/or possible liability?

Step 6. Piloting of Plan and Debrief

Purpose: **To engage all staff, students, and parents of the school system in a crisis scenario and evaluate the procedure for modifications.**

You have fire evacuation drills to test the plan and the schools' response. If the SERP is important enough to develop, then it is also worth testing. The test could also serve as a starting point to engage students, staff, parents, and others in a discussion of violence and trauma in general.

This is the opportunity to test the design you've created for the SERP, as well as communications procedures with the community service agencies as well.

The debriefing should involve all of the relevant players identified in **Figure 1**. When testing a plan it is also helpful to have designated observers who are looking for trouble spots and who are free to move about to evaluate the task. These observers could be from the Attorney General's office, local police department, or other agency.

Key Points

- Discuss what did and did not work, and why
- Set specific times and dates for modification of the system
- Discuss back-up positions for some people (substitutes)
- Create a staff development plan to ensure that all identified staff have the necessary skills to implement the SERP (e.g., basic first aid, CPR, mediation, and/or counseling)

Step 7. SERP Updates

Purpose: **To keep the SERP timely and relevant.**

Every crisis or near-crisis is a learning opportunity. Use these experiences to talk about what went well and what did not. What could have been done differently that would have made a difference? If the situation had been a little different would the response still have worked as well?

The following opportunities are recommended for updates:

- post-crisis;
- increase in staff and new employee orientation; and
- orientation for new students and parents.

All systems can fail, and this is one of those plans you hope you never have to use. But in the event that you must implement your SERP, it may not proceed as planned. Regular updates, discussions, and attention to early warning signs will certainly increase the chances of things going smoothly.

When former President Ronald Reagan was shot, a cabinet member went before national and world television and said that he was now in charge. This was not the vice president, but the secretary of state. This very simple and incorrect statement created worries that reached the Kremlin and ricocheted through the minds of many people, creating undue anxiety. Unpredictable things happen during a crisis situation and no one, not even those in the highest levels of our government, can predict actual outcomes or how things will play out.

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About the Authors

Efrain Garza Fuentes, Ed.D.

Dr. Fuentes was born in East Los Angeles and raised in the Watts section of South Central Los Angeles. His professional training and background include: individual, group, child and family therapy; clinical supervision; and program development. He's served a range of populations including those who are alcohol and drug dependent or incarcerated, in/outpatients, couples, refugees, immigrants, and students. He is a former instructor and guidance counselor from the Boston Public Schools and has provided extensive consultation and training to industry, police departments, schools, hospitals, universities, and international health organizations. He has lectured both nationally and internationally on education, health, and service related issues of multicultural populations. He is the former director of the Office of Multicultural Services of the Massachusetts Department of Mental Health and was the Vice President of Hispanic Market Connections where he worked in collaboration with the American Institute for Research on a study of Hispanic men and condom use. Presently he is a Staff Associate with The Regional Laboratory where he is working on school improvement and the integration of social services in schools. He is also on the faculty of the Massachusetts School of Professional Psychology where he teaches the courses *Cross-cultural Psychology* and *Critical Thinking*; he also teaches at Boston University's School of Social Work. In addition, he is also a free-lance writer for *La Opinion* (Los Angeles Spanish-language daily newspaper).

Raymond M. Rose, M.Ed.

Mr. Rose has spent his career as an educator. He began as a science teacher, guidance counselor, and assistant principal. More recently, he has worked in the areas of civil rights, school improvement, and educational technology. He was a member of the team that developed *Making Change for School Improvement*, an internationally known simulation that provides practical experiences for educators in managing school change to better serve all students. He has been a keynote speaker and presented at conferences and workshops across the country to help educators understand and manage change. He is currently providing assistance to schools on a variety of educational equity and technology issues. He directs The Regional Laboratory's Software Preview Center and provides telecommunications technical assistance for clients of the Laboratory's Eisenhower Regional Alliance for Mathematics and Science Education Reform. He is also coordinating the introduction of a new Regional Laboratory service, *Pathways*, which will put research-based information and resources into the hands of educators electronically. He previously served as associate director of the New England Center for Equity Assistance, where he helped a number of urban schools develop and implement desegregation activities and provide educational equity to all of their students. Mr. Rose was born and raised in Fairhaven, Massachusetts.

As difficult as it is to prepare for emergencies, such preparation can save lives, time, and needless trauma in the event of a real emergency. Preparation is difficult because we don't want to admit the increasing likelihood of a crisis situation — and it takes time and effort to develop contingency plans, time we're spending solving today's problem, not anticipating tomorrow's. But what many schools used to see as an impossibility has too often become today's reality. We offer this handbook as a guide to the process of planning for a crisis in the hopes that it assists you in your planning and that it makes your potential response more effective, efficient, and complete.

This handbook is not a violence prevention program — it is a school preparedness plan that can help you anticipate, plan for, and respond to a variety of crises, ranging from natural disasters to accidents to acts of violence. We see it as one part of an overall effort that includes accident/violence prevention.

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The Regional Laboratory
for Educational Improvement of the Northeast & Islands
300 Brickstone Square, Suite 950
Andover, Massachusetts 01810
(508) 470-0098 • Fax: (508) 475-9220

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